

**Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee  
To the Darien, Connecticut, Board of Selectmen**

Draft Minutes

**Date:** September 1, 2015

**Place:** Darien Town Hall, Room 119-B

**Present:** Terry Duffy, Joanna Garrett, Susanne Handler, Beth Harmon, Ted Hawkins, Holly Schulz-Amatruda, and Bert von Stuelpnagel

**Absent:** Jennifer Morgan, Pat Morrissey

**Guest Speaker:** Don Anderson, Administrative Services Captain, Darien Police Dept.

This was a regular meeting of the Pedestrian Infrastructure Advisory Committee (PIAC).

Chair Beth Harmon called the meeting order at 7:30 pm. The minutes from the meeting of August 25 were approved as drafted.

Our guest speaker was Captain Don Anderson in his capacity as Liaison to the town's Legal Traffic Authority (LTA). The LTA is distinct from the Traffic Division of the Police Dept. The former is comprised of the three members of the Police Commission. Members of the Commission are appointed by the Board of Selectmen and serve for a 3 year terms. Current Commission – and therefore LTA – members are: Paul Johnson, Kim Huffard, and Tom Joyce.

Don said that the LTA has had many discussions favoring pedestrian safety but it is not the arbiter of sidewalk placement. That is a role for public policy makers. Asked if there is a straightforward policy on sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure, Don said no. As for new sidewalks, he has seen less than a handful done over the past 30 years: Hoyt Street, Locust Hill Rd, Edgerton, & Tokeneke Road to 120. Bert asked if much work that crossed his desk for the LTA referenced priorities from the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. Don answered no, most of the work for the LTA are for individual projects not large developments.

Don mentioned that he had just received a handwritten map from a citizen proposing fully protected crosswalks downtown. We have concurrent (traffic and walkers can go at the same time) but not protected crosswalks in downtown. Protected is when all traffic stops to allow pedestrians to cross and usually has an electronic green hand with a countdown clock. He was not hopeful about changing this to protected crosswalks which would slow traffic on an already congested highway. After all "we are a vehicle driven society", Don said, and the Post Road is a state highway governed by the State Department of Transportation (DOT). There are four state highways running through Darien: Route 1, 106 (Hoyt St), 124 (Mansfield Ave) and 136 (Tokeneke Rd).

The LTA follows best practices found in the "Green Book" of the American Association of State Highway Officials (ASHTO) and the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Handbook published by the Federal Highway Administration. These outline national standards

for traffic signs, road construction, markings, etc. Some of the standards to which LTA adheres which might concern the PIAC include:

- a crosswalk should not route foot traffic from a sidewalk onto a neighborhood street for example (crosswalk to nowhere) , it must go into another sidewalk or landing pad (ADA compliant refuge)
- minimum volume of foot traffic to justify installation of a crosswalk is at least nine users per hour
- stop signs should not be installed just to slow traffic

Bert outlined how adding painted crosswalks across the neighborhood cul-de-sacs and streets where they feed into Mansfield Ave would make the sidewalk leading to Royal School more walkable and send an important message. Don responded that crosswalks are not just paint applied to the roadbed. Don estimated the cost of the required ADA compliant curb cut, if not in place already, would be \$20,000 each.

The town has three portable speed-monitoring electronic signs which are rotated to various locations around town. Each costs \$4,000. Don believes that they are effective in slowing speeds and the Police Dept. might like more but are limited by the budget. Holly asked how many more would be ideal for full coverage? An additional five is the number. The "Slow School is Open & Speed Limit" flashing electronic signs cost \$10,000 each and two are needed for installation covering both directions of traffic. Joanna asked about the budget process and how a request for more signs, more crosswalks and sidewalks would be processed. The LPA has no budget. A detailed review followed covering the town's annual budgeting process and what entities are involved. For a new pedestrian or bike infrastructure project the LTA would work with DPW and P&Z on initiating a request. Then, if the project is approved, final decision and approval of the expenditure lies with the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and the RTM.

As to traffic enforcement, Don stated that the statistics support that the Darien Police Department is doing an effective job and is responsive to resident requests. If a town resident has a traffic issue or would like to request monitoring of speed or safety on a road call the Traffic Dept. @ 203-662-5371 or email them at [www.trafficdivision@darienct.gov](mailto:www.trafficdivision@darienct.gov) . There are no traffic cameras in town, in fact they are prohibited by state law. Regulations require that drivers, not cars, be ticketed.

A discussion of school safety issues followed. Crossing guards are vetted and hired by the Police Department. No new crossing guard positions have been added for some time, only losses as schools were closed or traffic lights took their place. Don and the LTA would be interested in hearing from the PIAC if we can identify a need for more. Their job is not to direct traffic but to safely assure pedestrian crossings. Holly mentioned that she was at a Board of Education briefing for new high school students and that parents were shocked to learn that if you lived within a 2 mile radius of the DHS no school buses are provided. Access roads to DHS from close-in neighborhoods are clearly bereft of sidewalks, so this is a problem.

Concerning pedestrian right-of-way issues, Don clarified that unless a pedestrian is "substantially" in the crosswalk, they do not have the right-of-way. Just standing at the edge of a cross walk does not require an approaching car to stop. "Unmarked crosswalks", a term which we just discovered in traffic readings, is a concept that under state law a crosswalk is assumed at any road corner. Regarding road bollards which are the in-road, removable signs saying slow down, the town has installed several (Noroton Ave, Overbrook Ln, & Andrews Dr) but they have drawbacks as they have to be removed in winter and have been plagued by theft. The LTA has had a moratorium on speed humps for several years because of: cost, plowing damage, slows emergency vehicles, extra signage, and some neighbors complain.

The LTA has taken the position that they won't accept private funding for traffic control. That might disadvantage one neighborhood over another for public safety which would be unacceptable. However, if an organization like the Darien Trust or another town-wide philanthropic organization wished to make a contribution for sidewalks, crosswalks or signage that should be acceptable. Of course the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and RTM have to approve any sizeable donation.

Bert congratulated the Darien Police Department for doing an outstanding job. They are well respected in the community and effective at maintaining order while promoting safety. They have a reputation for being responsive and taking pride in their work. All committee members agreed and thanked Don.

The meeting adjourned at 9:03

Guests in the Audience: Susan Marks, Board of Selectmen, Mark Adiletta, Chair Public Works Committee, RTM

---

Respectfully submitted by Ted Hawkins, Clerk